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**University of South Carolina Lancaster
Annual Accountability Report**

Fiscal Year 1997-1998

General Education

Definition: General Education provides students with a breadth of understanding of the humanities, sciences, and social sciences which forms the underpinning and context for the specialized knowledge of the academic majors. At USC Lancaster, General Education includes fundamental skills in reading, writing, reasoning, oral communication, cultural literacy and personal development. These serve as the basis for the capacity to succeed in chosen career fields and to assume the responsibilities of informed and enlightened citizenship.

Indicators:

Students are assisted in developing communication skills including the ability to write effectively for both academic and professional audiences, to listen critically and speak effectively before a group, and to read effectively and attain a basic familiarity with texts of Western and other cultures. Students are assisted in developing critical thinking through acquiring analytical reasoning abilities, exercising informed value judgements, and developing mathematical and/or computational skills. Students develop an understanding of Western culture as well as experiencing some exposure to other cultures. USC Lancaster also recognizes the centrality of science and technology to modern culture, and USCL students are offered opportunities to increase their understanding and familiarity in these crucial subject areas. The intellectual, personal, physical, and social development of USC Lancaster students is promoted by providing opportunities for productive interaction among students, faculty, and staff which support development of a spirit of curiosity, integrity, and confidence in planning and pursuing academic, career, and personal goals.

Assessment Methods:

Success is measured through rates of successful completion of required General Education courses focusing on communication skills. Success is measured through student success in moving through required General Education coursework which focuses on analytical skills. Success is indicated through the content components required by the General Education core curriculum which require a minimum of six hours of social science (focusing on culture(s)); on informal data on student use of campus technology; and on successful completion of required General Education science courses. Survey data and USCL Counseling Center data (College Student Inventory) measures levels of success in this area.

Assessment Results:

Fall 1995 Continuing Student Survey data indicated that 79% of respondents felt their writing skills were somewhat to very improved; 80% felt their ability to listen effectively was somewhat to very improved; and 63% recorded somewhat to very improved speaking skills. Fall 1995 Continuing Student Survey data indicated that 81% of respondents felt their analytical skills were somewhat to very improved.

Core curriculum requirements in social sciences require that students succeed in social science courses (6 hrs. credit) in order to complete General Education requirements. Measures of student use of technology include enrollments in Math 111 (where students are required to fulfill a technology component); enrollments in the Freshman Seminar (over 50% of entering Freshmen) where a requirement to become familiar with

technology both in the Academic Success Center and in the library has been standardized; and enrollments in other General Education courses requiring computer literacy including Computer Science 101. In the sciences, students continue to be required to complete six hours of laboratory science.

Fall 1995 Continuing Student Survey data indicated 76% of respondents felt they had attained somewhat improved to very improved ability to plan and pursue personal goals, while 79% reported a somewhat to very improved level of general self-confidence; Counseling Center College Student Inventory comparison data (students enrolled at least three semesters) indicates that students report an increase in academic confidence from 40.3 to 59.2; a self-reliance increase from 57.3 to 63.0; and an increase in career planning from 50.7 to 66.3 percentile.

Use of Findings:

Results indicate that required courses emphasizing communication and analytical skills should continue their intensive focus in those areas; that despite the prevalence of General Education courses requiring skill attainment in technology, a discussion on the advisability of formally - requiring and tracking skill attainment in use of technology for all students in the General Education curriculum should be conducted; and that additional discussions on helping students attain further autonomy and self-confidence should take place. This discussion should be strengthened by survey data that is more specifically tailored to identifying those specific courses which most improve student self-confidence and ability to pursue personal goals.

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